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Commissioner for Environment
Oceans and Fisheries

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Mr Matt Shardlow
Chief Executive
BUGLIFE
The Lindens, 86 Lincoln Road,
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Dear Mr Shardlow,

Thank you for your letter of 30 January 2020 on the EU Pollinators Initiative and suggestions on how to step up actions on pollinators. Executive Vice-President Timmermans asked me to reply on his behalf.

The Commission fully acknowledges the urgency of taking decisive actions to stop the decline of pollinators. We welcome the opinion of the European Parliament on the EU Pollinators Initiative, which we will take into account in the implementation of the current Initiative. A successful implementation of its actions requires engagement of all stakeholders, and the active role of Member States is particularly indispensable.

I agree with your suggestions for key focus areas for action. The EU Pollinators Initiative reflects them well, aiming to ensure adequate habitats - quantitatively and qualitatively - for pollinating insects, reduce the impacts of pesticides and invasive alien species, and improve the knowledge base. The Commission will assess the efforts undertaken and analyze remaining challenges in the review of the Initiative planned for this year. Just as during the development of the initiative, inputs and recommendations from NGOs in the post 2020 follow-up will be invaluable.

The follow-up will be devised in the context of an increased level of ambition to tackle the loss of biodiversity delivered through the new Biodiversity Strategy for 2030, which will soon be adopted by the Commission. The strategy will address the key aspects mentioned above and include policy targets and actions on pollinators. In addition, the Commission will ensure that the Farm to Fork strategy, another important delivery under the European Green Deal, is fully coherent with the biodiversity strategy and actions on pollinators.

The proposal for the Common Agricultural Policy post-2020 aims to make a substantial contribution to achieving the objectives of the European Green Deal, including on

biodiversity. The key innovation in the proposal is a new approach that will provide Member States with the flexibility required to design interventions that most adequately fit their local situations and needs. It also allows to better contribute to national biodiversity strategies, including to the priorities for the protection and restoration of wild pollinators therein identified. The Commission will promote the integration of pollinator considerations in the implementation of the post-2020 CAP, and will include a pollinator indicator in the performance and monitoring framework once finalized and operational.

Regarding pesticides, the Commission recognised and acted on the need to strengthen the authorisation process in order to protect wild bees. Unfortunately, a clear majority of the Member States have so far not agreed to implement the 2013 EFSA Bee Guidance Document in its entirety. To overcome this stalemate, the Commission proposed a draft Regulation that would have allowed the implementation of part of the Guidance related to acute toxicity to honeybees, which was supported by the majority of Member States on 16 July 2019. The Commission regrets that the European Parliament, on 23 October 2019, objected to the draft Regulation. The Commission has however mandated EFSA to review the guidance document in light of new scientific evidence and the most up-to-date methodologies for conducting risk assessments. I would like to reassure you that the objective is to ensure a higher level of protection, and not lowering it. The Member State experts and stakeholders are closely involved in the process, so that all views are duly taken into account and that the guidance document can be swiftly adopted following the review.

I would like to thank you and all the signatory organisations of your letter for all the contribution to the EU actions on pollinators. This helps us to make them more relevant and effective. The European Green Deal brings new ambition for biodiversity, and thereby for pollinators. I count on your continued support to translate this higher ambition into concrete action on the ground.

Yours sincerely,



Virginijus Sinkevičius